

THE COUNSELOR AND ABILITY GROUPING
IN LARGE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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INTRODUCTION

It was assumed in this study that the improvement of education might be accelerated by schools better educating the individual students who pass through them. Conant (7) agreed that secondary schools in Kansas were responsible for educating the boy who will be a scientist, the girl who will marry at eighteen, the prospective auto mechanic, and the future captain of industry. Better education of the students in Kansas schools included education of the bright and the not so bright, children with various vocational, professional, and academic interests, all educated within a democratic environment which best challenged and developed the talents and abilities each possessed.

An attempt had been made in many secondary schools in Kansas to accelerate improvement in education by programs grouping students according to ability. In many schools this was an attempt to enrich the curriculum for more able students through honors programs or other enriched courses. In other schools ability grouping also attempted to include the below-average students to make course work more meaningful for them.

Schools had for hundreds of years devoted effort to the problems of grouping students for most efficient learning. Centuries ago Plato suggested formal education that was to begin at age six and continue to age eighteen, when a series of examinations would separate pupils for workmen, or advanced

placement, and finally provide the philosopher-kings who would rule the state (23).

During the history of our nation we have seen schools engaged in various grouping patterns in efforts to accelerate and improve education. As the complexity of society and the subsequent complexity of subject matter developed, schools felt the increased need for methods and materials adapted to various maturity levels within class groups. Ability grouping declined during the depression of the 1930's and the war years primarily because of financial reasons. According to Hammond (13, p. 22), "In 1934 there was a definite trend away from homogeneous grouping in many systems which had used it for years." Grouping programs returned to the nation's schools after World War II and continue to grow in scope and popularity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The primary concern of this study was the role of the counselor in this new era of ability grouping of students in Kansas high schools. It was necessary to this study to investigate the present practices in ability grouping in large Kansas high schools. It was also necessary to investigate at least to a partial degree the role of the administrator as well as the role of the counselor in these grouping programs. This was necessary to visualize to a minor degree

the relationship of the administrator and the counselor in establishing and carrying through a program of ability grouping of students. It was assumed that the success of any program of ability grouping was going to involve multiple factors in the school environment. Stimson and Petrich (23) found that the community, the school facilities, the teaching staff, the traditions of the school, the skill and convictions of the administration and guidance personnel, the ability and working operational policies of the school board, the financing problems of the school district and a host of interrelated factors influenced grouping and scheduling. Therefore, the role of the counselor could not be entirely isolated and viewed as a separate entity within the school. The function and duty of the counselor in the grouping of students remained the major problem dealt with in this report.

Limitations of the study

The nature of this study made it necessary to impose certain limitations in order for valid research to be completed. A review of the literature was limited to material of the past five years. This limitation was considered valid because of the vast amount of material that has been written in the past, prior to 1959, on homogeneous grouping of students. Ability grouping was not considered to be the

central problem of this study, but rather major emphasis was placed on the role of the counselor in ability grouping programs in Kansas high schools at the time the study was done.

Another limitation imposed on the study by the nature of the research which was done was to limit the study to large Kansas high schools. From Conant (7) it was concluded that the adequacy of the guidance program and the opportunity for a valid investigation of ability grouping would best be limited to Kansas schools of four hundred or more students.

Conant (7, p. 44) found that, "In a satisfactory school system the counseling should start in the elementary school, and there should be good articulation between the counseling in the junior and senior high schools if the pattern is 6-3-3 or between the counseling in the elementary school and the high school if the system is organized on an 8-4 basis." Conant (7, p. 44) further recommended that there should be one full time counselor (or guidance officer) for every two hundred fifty to three hundred pupils in the high school. Conant (7, p. 77) indicated that the prevalence of high schools with graduating classes of less than one hundred students constituted one of the serious obstacles to good secondary education throughout most of the United States. These schools could not offer a comprehensive curriculum because the expense became exorbitant in small

schools. Conant (7) further concluded that such schools were not in a position to provide a satisfactory education for any of their students, the academically talented, the vocationally oriented, or the slow reader.

Using the finding of Conant (7) with ability grouping viewed in terms of the division necessary to meet the individual academic, vocational, and professional interests and needs of the majority of Kansas high school students this study was limited to an investigation of the following basic problems with their related parts:

1. Present practices in ability grouping in Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more students.
2. The role of the administrator and his relation to the counselor in the ability grouping of students.
3. The role of the counselor in ability grouping of students in large Kansas high schools.

Definition of Terms

Ability grouping as investigated in this study was defined as the division of classes and the grouping of students into below-average, average, and above-average groups. Any inclusion of the especially gifted and special education for them was limited and considered as a separate and special problem in the schools educational program. According to Conant (7, p. 62) these pupils of the highly gifted group constitute on a national basis about three per cent of the

student population. They may well be too few in number in any given school to warrant instruction in a special class. For similar reasons this study was also limited in its investigation of special education for the mentally retarded or in the treatment of special reading programs and classes for slow learners. These groups would not be included in this definition of ability grouping.

CURRENT PRACTICES IN ABILITY GROUPING IN LARGE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOLS

Extent of ability grouping

In order to determine the extent of ability grouping and to determine what was being done in Kansas high schools a survey was made, by means of a questionnaire, of the 63 Kansas high schools with an enrollment of 400 or more students. Questionnaires were sent to the counselors and then to the administrators in these 63 high schools. Fifty-five questionnaires were returned by the counselors in these 63 high schools, a return of 87 per cent. Forty-six questionnaires were returned by the administrators in these 63 high schools, a return of 73 per cent. Total schools from which questionnaires were returned included 58 of the 63 schools surveyed.

The result of this survey indicated that 55 of the 58 schools which responded to the study had a program of ability grouping involving at least a part of their classes. In 95 per cent of the schools responding to the study, counselors were involved in the division of classes into below-average, average, or above-average classes in working with individual students and planning or working with the school curriculum and class scheduling. Comments added to the questionnaires indicated that in a significant number of these schools, programs were just being started and students had been grouped in only a part of their classes.

Practices in Grouping Students

As was noted from Stimson and Petrich (23) structured plans for grouping students according to individual abilities involve many factors. The community, school facilities, the teaching staff, the traditions of the school, the skill of the administrator and guidance personnel, the operating policies of the school board, the financing problems of the school district, and other interrelated factors, all influence grouping as they do the entire school program. Stimson and Petrich (23) also indicated that each school would vary in its attitude and planning as these factors varied. Basic to the decision of the method of grouping students is an understanding of the philosophy and the interests and purposes of the individual school. Polglaze (21) said that, "the purposes of the school and the objectives must be clearly defined in terms of behavioral goals."

Thirty-four of the 58 schools included in this study indicated they had a definite educational policy governing their grouping program. This was 59 per cent of the schools surveyed. A considerable number of the schools not included in this 59 per cent indicated they had only partial programs or were making relatively new attempts at providing for ability grouping.

Just as many factors were found to create different needs and situations governing the formation of school

policies, varied criteria were also encountered in reviewing past research and planning to determine student levels. Table I indicates the criteria that were most commonly used by large Kansas high schools in determining student levels. The number of schools which used each method are indicated.

TABLE I
CRITERIA USED FOR ASSIGNMENT OF STUDENTS

Criteria	Schools using		Schools not using		No reply		Total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
Past classroom achievement	55	87.3	1	1.6	7	11.1	63
Consultation of classroom teachers	51	80.9	5	8.0	7	11.1	63
Aptitude or mental measurements tests	46	73.0	8	12.7	9	14.3	63
Pupil interest and desire	40	63.5	16	25.4	7	11.1	63
Standardized achievement tests	37	58.7	18	28.6	8	12.7	63

No school surveyed used only one criteria as a basis for placing students in homogeneous groups. Combinations of the above criteria were used in all schools with past classroom achievement used as a basis for student grouping by all but one of the schools with a grouping program. This use of a combination of factors in the placement of students was

emphasized by Stimson and Petrich (23) in describing the grouping program in the Hanover, New Hampshire schools. According to Stimson and Petrich (23, p. 84) the following information was obtained and used by the guidance department of the Hanover, New Hampshire schools as a basis for student grouping.

First, we use recommendations from each of the students four academic teachers plus the foreign language teacher if these students have enrolled in this subject. The teachers of English, science, history, and mathematics are asked to express their opinion of the students in terms of level of performance in their class during the current year. We ask the teacher to evaluate the student according to his work and study habits, desire, and willingness to learn, and maturity and stability to handle that particular level of subject matter.

Second, we rate the performance by test scores. We use various types of tests at the grade levels but strive to section by the use of aptitude tests and not intelligence or achievement tests. We try, in effect, to measure the "developed potential". We need scores in terms of reading levels, language ability, and mathematics, as well as the SCAT scores of verbal and quantitative ability, and a total score.

Third, a composite score of these ten factors is tabulated, then the class is divided into the required number of sections. We now have the basis for original grouping, after which it is possible to make individual deviations for those students who are especially strong in one area of study, but may not fall into a high enough category in the over-all grouping. Here we take into account the past subject record and the pointed recommendation of that subject matter teacher.

According to the report on the Hanover program, ability grouping was started in classes at the junior high school level. The survey of large Kansas high schools indicated that students were grouped according to ability in 48 of the 58

schools responding to the survey prior to entering high school. Authorities Conant (7), Watson (24), Hammond (13), Polglaze (21) would all agree that students began grouping themselves, through their choice of elective subject matter, whether a structured grouping program existed or not prior to the high school program. Adequate records and a consideration of past achievement at the junior and senior high school level became a major feature of the counselor and his role in the ability grouping program.

THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN ABILITY GROUPING

The position of the administrator in any school made it necessary to include a brief look at the part the administrator played in student programs of ability grouping in large Kansas high schools. Stimson and Petrich (23) qualified this when they indicated that whatever the method of grouping, one of the key responsibilities of the administrator was to cause or help create a sense of excellence in parents, teachers, and students. Long-range planning and clear educational goals would apply to grouping as to all other parts of the total school program. According to Polglaze (21, p. 51), "Instructional groups which reflect pupil needs largely reflect the academic program of the school". As was pointed out earlier in this study, fifty-nine per cent of the schools which returned questionnaires had established definite educational policies for the grouping of students.

Table II compares the answers given by counselors and administrators to the question of regulations and objectives to be used in ability grouping of the students.

TABLE II

ARE REGULATIONS AND OBJECTIVES TO BE USED IN ABILITY
GROUPING OF STUDENTS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	43	2	18	63
Counselors	46	6	11	63

No difference was noted in the replies of counselors and administrators. Both indicated that in nearly all schools regulations and objectives to be achieved were determined by the administration.

The importance of active organization by the administrator in the successful operation of the ability grouping program was indicated by the interesting, although perhaps not conclusive fact, expressed when counselors and administrators were asked to give their opinion concerning adequate time for planning and executing a program of ability grouping. Table III compares the answers given by counselors and administrators.

TABLE III

IS THE NECESSARY TIME PROVIDED FOR COUNSELORS
AND TEACHERS TO PLAN AND EXECUTE A POLICY
OF ABILITY GROUPING IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	34	6	23	63
Counselors	27	21	15	63

A study of the above table indicates that a marked difference of opinion existed between administrators and counselors concerning the time needed and given for counselors and teachers to plan and execute a grouping program for the students.

Another area where counselors and administrators showed a difference in their replies to this study involved the position of the administrator in explaining the grouping program to the parents. It was noted earlier in this study that many factors were involved in the student programs for ability grouping. One of these factors was the attitude and acceptance of the program by the parents of the students involved. According to Simson and Petrich (23) the answer to parent problems lies in careful explanation to the student and parent by the administrator and guidance personnel. Table IV compares the answers given by counselors and administrators in trying to fix the responsibility for explaining

the grouping program to the parents.

TABLE IV

IS THE ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE FOR EXPLAINING
CLASS GROUPING TO THE PARENTS?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	37	4	22	63
Counselors	34	18	11	63

A difference was noted in the above table in that although the number of administrators and of counselors who considered this a responsibility of the administrator was about equal, a much larger number (18) of the counselors than administrators (4) reported that they thought this was not a responsibility of the administrator. No attempt was made here to draw any further conclusions because a majority of the counselors and administrators answered yes to the question and then indicated that explaining the program to parents was done jointly with both participating.

Comments of both administrators and counselors indicated that the cooperation of the parents was one of the vital factors in the success or failure of their grouping programs. Stimson and Petrich (23, p. 81) would agree with this and indicated that they have a standard answer to parental requests to have their child placed in a faster class.

"If your child does not like the class he is in let him work harder and secure better grades and we will then place him in the next highest section."

According to Conant (7, p. 49) in the required subjects and in those elected by students with a wide range of ability, the students should be grouped subject by subject. Stimson and Petrich (23) agreed with this and listed scheduling as one of the difficult problems associated with ability grouping. All of the administrators responding to this study indicated that they were responsible for setting up and approving class schedules in their school. Counselors agreed with this response in all schools where both counselors and administrators responded to the study. Counselors in two schools in Kansas, however, indicated that the administrator was not responsible for setting up and approving class schedules in their schools. In 40 of the 58 schools which returned questionnaires both the administrators and the counselors indicated that ability grouping of the students required extra class planning and additional time for scheduling by the administrators.

Even more important than the cooperation of the parents in the successful achievement of goals and objectives of the grouping program was the ability of the teachers to use this program to better meet the individual needs of the students. The importance of the classroom teachers in the

grouping program was brought home in two separate cases in Kansas high schools when both the administrators and counselors in these schools cited the inability of group-oriented teachers to do individualized instruction as a definite factor in the failure of ability grouping as an educational aid in their schools. Literature on ability grouping indicated that individualized instruction to meet the needs of the students could not be done by grouping alone, but needs to be carried through by even more individual and personalized instruction by the classroom teacher. Hammond (13, p. 23) indicated that an able teacher, given freedom to work creatively, is the most important factor in grouping. Metcalf (17, p. 206) made the following statement concerning the problem of individualizing instruction by the teacher.

The most effective high school teachers are those who have the capacity to take a group of students at the beginning of the year and through impact of personality and use of devices of one kind and another, provide for each an incentive and a plan.

To be effective the high school teacher must have the capacity to individualize instruction as students vary greatly in capacities, interests, goals, and other respects. Enriching the curriculum or simply providing extra work for honor students and high ability students does not always mean that individual student needs are being met.

The heart of the administrators role in the grouping of students could well be in the area of staffing and train-

ing teachers. According to Stimson and Petrich (23) it does take specially trained teachers to handle both low and high ability students. Tables V and VI show the position of the administrator and the counselor in large Kansas high schools in providing in-service training programs for the teachers in their schools.

TABLE V

IS THE ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE FOR ESTABLISHING IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR THE TEACHERS IN METHODS AND OBJECTIVES OF ABILITY GROUPING?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	36	5	22	63
Counselors	38	13	12	63

In those schools which provided in-service training for teachers in methods and objectives of ability grouping the counselors and administrators felt that this was primarily the responsibility of the administrator. Counselors were engaged in these in-training services as Table VI indicates.

TABLE VI

IS THE COUNSELOR ENGAGED IN ANY IN-TRAINING SERVICE TO
ACQUAINT TEACHERS WITH THE PURPOSES AND
OBJECTIVES OF ABILITY GROUPING
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	26	15	22	63
Counselors	27	26	10	63

No marked difference was noted in the answers given by administrators and counselors in regard to in-service training programs. Counselors were concerned with in-service training programs to acquaint teachers with methods and objectives of ability grouping in 43 per cent of the schools surveyed.

The importance of the classroom teacher in carrying out the objectives of the student program led to an investigation not only of the in-service training programs in the schools, but also an investigation of the schools which hire special teachers for teaching the various levels. Here, the position of the administrator makes his role a key one in the success of not only the grouping program, but the total school program of which it is a part (23). Table VII indicates the number of schools hiring special teachers to teach particular student levels.

TABLE VII
ARE SPECIAL TEACHERS HIRED TO TEACH EITHER SLOW
LEARNERS OR ADVANCED STUDENTS?

Student groups or levels	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Are special teachers chosen to teach accelerated or above-average classes?	29	22	12	63
Are special teachers selected to teach retarded or below-average classes?	32	20	11	63

Comments made on the questionnaire indicated that school administrators were unable to hire special teachers for above-average or below-average classes in all cases where this was thought to be desirable. In-service training to prepare their own special teachers was considered to be very important by the administrators. Stimson and Petrich (23) would agree with this because they indicated from their own experience that most teachers would prefer to teach the advanced classes. They considered it necessary to establish a teacher rotation system for teaching advanced and slower classes with teachers assigned to both groups in some schools.

Another problem affecting the administrator was the grading and advancement of students within the grouping program. Stimson and Petrich (23) said that the administrator would be faced with the task of over-hauling the grading system in a successful grouping program. Twenty-

eight of the 58 schools responding to this study indicated that they had a separate grading scale for students in advanced or honors classes. This was considered necessary because of the enrichment of the courses for those students of higher-ability. Grading students in these classes on the same basis as the regular students tended to make students want to by-pass those courses where extra work or more competition would be encountered. Conant (7, p. 59) reported that, "in some schools, the main problem stems from the tendency of some academically talented pupils either to elect an easy program or to enroll in a vocational sequence to prepare for an immediate job." According to Conant (7, p. 66) students should be graded on the same basis only in those subjects in which all are enrolled at the same level and that students should not be ranked in class according to grade average upon graduation.

Flexibility was considered to be very important to the success of the grouping program. Flexibility, not only in the grading scale, but in the placement and transfer of students within the various class levels. Folglaze (21) stated that to attempt to adhere to a stated grade level organization of materials would be to ignore the premise of needs on which the instructional groups are based. Forty-five of the 58 schools which responded to this study indicated they drop students from above-average classes for low

achievement or advance students from below-average classes for high achievement. Careful placement of the students prevented much of the need for such rescheduling (23).

Many factors were found to influence the role of the administrator in the ability grouping of students. According to Polglaze (21, p. 53), "when we structure instructional groups of pupils, we set up a chain reaction which starts with the identification of pupil needs, works through the assignment of teachers, and culminates in the act of evaluation."

All functions of the administrative process associated with the total school program were found to be a part of the ability grouping of students. As Polglaze (21, p. 52) stated, "Instructional groups which reflect pupil needs largely reflect the academic program of the school." Ability grouping to achieve its objectives must become a part of the total school program.

THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR IN ABILITY GROUPING OF STUDENTS

There was an interrelation between the function of the administrator and the role played by the counselor in ability grouping programs in Kansas. Watson (24) would agree that ability grouping is not new, but has been with us ever since students were first given a choice of subject matter in secondary schools. Ability grouping as a structured program should arise from the total program which has already been established. In determining the practices in ability grouping which were being done in large Kansas high schools and the function of the administrator in the successful direction of these programs the question arose concerning the position of the counselor and his role in the sectioning process.

Stimson and Petrich (23) indicated that the counselor and other guidance personnel played a key role in the grouping program in their school. To superimpose a system known only to and understood only by the administrator would be futile. In order for grouping to work, those concerned must work with grouping. The grouping of students must be in accord with the understanding developed in parents, teachers, and students (23).

As was indicated in Table I on page nine of this study a combination of criteria was accumulated and used in

the placing of students at their various capacity levels. One of the criteria used was based on pupil interest and desire. The understanding of the grouping program by the students was one of the important factors in the success of the Hanover, New Hampshire program (23). Pupil interest and desire were used in determining ability levels in 40 of the 58 schools responding to this study. Table VIII summarizes the role of the counselor in meeting with individual students as a basis for determining these interests and desires.

TABLE VIII

DOES THE COUNSELOR MEET WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN
PERSONAL INTERVIEWS TO AID IN CLASS
SCHEDULING ACCORDING TO ABILITY?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	38	8	17	63
Counselors	45	8	10	63

Eight schools responding to the survey indicated that the counselor in their school did not meet with individual students as a basis for class scheduling on the basis of ability.

The criteria most used in placing students at their course level was found to be the past classroom achievement of the student. As was indicated in Table I on page nine all

of the schools with grouping programs except one used past classroom achievement as a basis for ability grouping.

Table IX indicates the number of counselors who met directly with classroom teachers to determine past achievement.

TABLE IX

DOES THE COUNSELOR WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE CLASSROOM
TEACHER IN DETERMINING PAST ACHIEVEMENT?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	36	5	22	63
Counselors	38	15	10	63
Counselors or administrators	39	15	9	63

Counselors and administrators indicated that in 39 of the 58 schools responding to the survey the counselor did meet directly with the classroom teacher as a part of the grouping process. In 35 of these 39 schools it was indicated by the counselors and administrators that the counselor also met informally with the classroom teacher to determine the need for ability grouping. This indicated that in these schools the teachers and the counselors worked together and played an important role in the grouping of students on the basis of individual capacities and abilities.

In all of the schools responding to the questionnaire

only two of the fifty-eight schools indicated that the counselor in their school was not responsible for selecting and administering aptitude or mental measurement tests. All of the schools responding indicated that aptitude or mental measurements tests were given to all students in the high school.

In addition to the previous information concerning the teachers, students, and the testing program in the grouping of students, it was considered a part of this study to determine if the counselors were engaged in any follow-up and evaluation to determine the benefits of the grouping programs which were being used. Table X presents the answers given by administrators and counselors in regard to follow-up and evaluation.

TABLE X

IS A FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF
ABILITY GROUPING DONE BY THE COUNSELOR
IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	31	7	25	63
Counselors	33	14	16	63

Nine of the schools which did not reply to this question indicated that their ability grouping programs were new and had not been in operation long enough for any accurate results

to have been obtained through follow-up and evaluation. In 33 of the schools surveyed this was considered a function of the counselor when it was done.

Not all counselors and administrators were found to be in favor of ability grouping. Table XI gives a summary of the opinions of counselors and administrators on the need for ability grouping.

TABLE XI

WOULD YOU CONSIDER THE DIVISION OF CLASSES ACCORDING TO
ABILITY A NECESSARY PART OF THE SCHOOLS ABILITY
TO MEET THE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
OF THE STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Official	Yes	No	No reply	Total
Administrators	39	6	18	63
Counselors	49	5	9	63

Seventy per cent of the counselors and administrators felt that ability grouping was necessary for schools to meet the needs of the individual students. Stimson and Petrich (23) would agree with this and indicated that ability grouping was the core of improved education in their school.

Earlier in this study it was reported that in 48 of the 58 schools included, grouping was done prior to the high school level. It was noted at that time that this also became one of the important roles of the counselor, to cor-

relate this previous grouping into the students schedules at the high school level.

The role of the counselor was varied and differed from school to school and community to community. The counselor could be expected to provide leadership in the establishment of an ability grouping program in all schools with a structured program. Structuring the program did not alter the fact that ability grouping must be made a part of the total school program to achieve its objective of better education of the students as they prepare for various functions and positions in society.

Development of understanding of the grouping program in the following four groups was necessary to a successful program:

First, the student must understand the aims and objectives of the program and be made to understand how it will help him. According to Stimson and Petrich (23) ability grouping has led to better work and less drop outs among both high- and low-ability students in their school.

Second, the parents must understand the importance of the grouping program in meeting the individual needs of the students. Authorities (7) (15) (21) (24) would agree that ability grouping is not undemocratic. The recognition and provision for individual differences is a basic part of our public school system.

Third, the teachers not only need to understand the aims and objectives sought through ability grouping, but must take an active part in carrying out these aims and objectives in the classroom. Metcalf (17) indicated that no system of structuring is going to meet the needs of the students unless the teachers are able to provide for these needs in the classroom.

Fourth, the administrator not only needs to take an active part in the grouping process, but must coordinate the goals to be achieved with the philosophy and goals of the total school program. Stimson and Petrich (23) stated, "Ability grouping is an administrative arrangement which makes it easier for teachers to adapt methods and materials to the ability levels of the students."

The coordination of these basic relationships was found to be necessary in those schools with successful ability grouping programs. There was an interrelation between the function of the administrator and the role played by the counselor in ability grouping programs in large Kansas high schools. The counselor played a key role in the grouping program in the following ways:

1. The counselor gathered information about student differences, to be used in the placement of students into homogeneous groups.
2. The counselor worked with classroom teachers to determine the need for ability grouping and the objectives to be achieved.
3. The counselor provided information to help the students and their parents better understand the grouping program and the basis for student placement.
4. The counselor shared the responsibility with the administrator of coordinating the efforts of students, teachers, and parents to achieve the most from the ability grouping of the students.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The problem was that of determining the practices used in ability grouping of students in large Kansas high schools and the role of the counselor in these programs of ability grouping. This study was made to answer some of the questions about the extent of ability grouping and the uses large Kansas high schools were making of the sectioning process. The information collected might be useful to counselors in improving education in their schools through the use of ability grouping.

The procedure used was a combination of library research and a survey of large Kansas high schools by means of a questionnaire. Literature on ability grouping published since 1959 was examined for the views expressed by educators about the proper functions of ability grouping and the place for it in the school's total educational program. Questionnaires were sent to Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more students to determine what was being done in ability grouping. Since it was the role of the counselor and the current practices in ability grouping which were being studied, the information was divided into three major sections:

1. Current practices in ability grouping in Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more students.

2. The role of the administrator and his relation to the counselor in the ability grouping of students.
3. The role of the counselor in ability grouping of students in large Kansas high schools.

Conclusions

An attempt was being made in many secondary schools in Kansas to accelerate improvement in education by programs grouping students according to ability. Fifty-five of the 58 schools which responded to this study indicated they had a program of ability grouping. Seventy per cent of the counselors and administrators in the 63 Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more felt that ability grouping was necessary for their schools to meet the needs of the individual students. Stimson and Petrich (23) would agree with this and indicated that ability grouping was the core of improved education in their school.

Improved education through the use of ability grouping programs was found to proceed best when the following conditions were followed:

1. Ability grouping of students worked best when a combination of criteria were used to determine the placement of the students in class levels.
2. Students were grouped subject by subject in order for grouping to meet individual student needs.
3. Ability grouping was made an integral part of the total school program.

All functions of the administrative process associated

with the total school program were found to be a part of the administrator's role in the ability grouping of students. As Polglaze (21, p. 51) stated, "instructional groups which reflect pupil needs largely reflect the academic program of the school." Leadership by the administrator in the following areas was found to be necessary for the successful operation of a program of ability grouping:

1. The administrator was responsible for establishing the regulations and objectives to be used in ability grouping.
2. The administrator must provide the organization of the school program in such a way that teachers and counselors are given the necessary time for planning and executing a program of ability grouping.
3. The administrator is responsible for staffing and providing for the training of the staff to achieve the objectives sought by ability grouping.
4. The administrator must accept responsibility for student placement and class scheduling and make ability grouping an integral part of the total school program.

There was an interrelation between the function of the administrator and the role played by the counselor in ability grouping programs in Kansas. To superimpose a system known only to and understood only by the administrator would be futile. The counselor played a key role in the grouping program in the following ways:

1. The counselor gathered information about student differences, as well as interests and desires, to be used in the placement of students into homogeneous groups.
2. The counselor worked with classroom teachers to

determine the need for ability grouping and the objectives to be achieved.

3. The counselor provided information to help the students and their parents better understand the grouping program and the basis for student placement.
4. The counselor shared the responsibility with the administrator of coordinating the efforts of students, teachers, and parents to achieve the most from the ability grouping of the students.

Ability grouping by itself was not enough, but grouping done to meet educational objectives and goals, and done with the cooperation of counselors, teachers, and administrators was found to facilitate better education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to take this opportunity of expressing his appreciation to his adviser, Dr. H. Leigh Baker, who has contributed of his time and energy in the furtherance of this investigation. Appreciation is also expressed to the counselors and administrators in Kansas who supplied information necessary for the completion of this study.

D. D. P.

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APPENDIX

November 5, 1962

Dear Mr.

The enclosed questionnaire is a part of a study being made to partially meet the requirements for a Master's Degree in Guidance at Kansas State University.

As an educator you are aware of the need for meeting the individual needs of high school students. You have been selected to aid in a study of the present practices in ability-grouping in Kansas High Schools with an enrollment of 400 or more students.

This study will attempt to obtain and evaluate information that will be useful to all administrators and counselors in the following areas:

1. Present practices in schools with adequate educational programs in the area of ability or preference grouping.
2. The role of the administrator in the grouping of students according to special aptitudes and abilities.
3. The role of the counselor in the administration of ability grouping programs.

Will you cooperate in this study by completing the enclosed questionnaire at your earliest convenience and returning it in the attached self-addressed envelope? It is important that both administrators and counselors fill in the questionnaire. Separate copies will be sent to both in order to determine the role of each in ability-grouping.

No individual or individual school system will be used in the study. I am interested in all of the schools in Kansas which according to Dr. Conant's report would have the necessary enrollment for an adequate educational program. It is important to this study that you give the questionnaire your prompt consideration and return it as soon as possible.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Daryl Parker
Decatur Community High School

Name _____

ABILITY GROUPING AND THE COUNSELOR IN
LARGE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOLS

DIRECTIONS: Please answer as many questions as possible with a yes or no by placing a check mark in the appropriate square at the right.

Any question which does not apply to your school should be indicated by placing a check mark in the last square at the right under does not apply.

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	does not apply
1. Does your school have a program for ability grouping of students?	☐	☐	☐
2. Is there an accelerated program for above-average ability students?	☐	☐	☐
3. Does your program provide special grouping for low-ability students?	☐	☐	☐
4. Does your school have a definite educational policy on ability grouping?	☐	☐	☐
5. Are any courses at the college level offered as part of the high school curriculum to above-average students?	☐	☐	☐
6. Are individual interests and desires of the students used in determining groups to which they are assigned?	☐	☐	☐
7. Are pupils in an honors program or an accelerated study group graded and recorded on the same basis as regular students?	☐	☐	☐
8. Are classroom teachers consulted in dividing students into groups on the basis of ability?	☐	☐	☐
9. Are students advanced from below average-classes for high achievement or dropped from above-average groups because of low achievement?	☐	☐	☐

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	does not apply
10. Are specially qualified teachers selected to teach retarded or slow learners?	☐	☐	☐
11. Are special teachers chosen to teach gifted pupils in accelerated or above-average classes?	☐	☐	☐
12. Are aptitude or mental measurement tests given to all students in the high school?	☐	☐	☐
13. Are the results of aptitude tests used to divide students according to ability?	☐	☐	☐
14. Are these tests selected and administered by the counselor?	☐	☐	☐
15. Is past classroom achievement used to divide classes according to ability?	☐	☐	☐
16. Does the counselor work directly with the classroom teacher in determining past achievement?	☐	☐	☐
17. Are standardized achievement tests used to select students for ability grouping?	☐	☐	☐
18. Are tests given at the end of the eighth grade for grouping at the start of the ninth year?	☐	☐	☐
19. Does the counselor meet informally with individual classroom teachers to determine the need for ability grouping?	☐	☐	☐
20. Does the counselor meet with individual students in personal interviews to aid in class scheduling according to ability?	☐	☐	☐

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	does not apply
21. Is the counselor engaged in any in-training service to acquaint teachers with the purposes and objectives of ability grouping in the high school?	☐	☐	☐
22. Is the administrator responsible for explaining class grouping to the parents?	☐	☐	☐
23. Are class schedules set up and approved by the administrator?	☐	☐	☐
24. Are students grouped according to ability in any class prior to entering senior high school?	☐	☐	☐
25. Is the administrator responsible for establishing in-service training programs for the teachers in methods and objectives of ability grouping?	☐	☐	☐
26. Is the necessary time provided for counselors and teachers to plan and execute a policy of ability grouping?	☐	☐	☐
27. Does the grouping of classes according to ability require extra class planning by the administrator?	☐	☐	☐
28. Is a follow-up and evaluation of the results of ability grouping done by the counselor in your school?	☐	☐	☐
29. Would you consider the division of classes according to ability a necessary part of the schools ability to meet the educational needs of the students?	☐	☐	☐
30. Are regulations and objectives to be used in ability grouping of students the responsibility of the administrator?	☐	☐	☐

Please include any additional comments: _____

THE COUNSELOR AND ABILITY GROUPING
IN LARGE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOLS

by

DARYL DEAN PARKER

B. S., Kansas State University, 1955

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1963

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3. The counselor provided information to help the students and parents better understand the grouping program and the basis for student placement.
4. The counselor shared the responsibility with the administrator of coordinating the efforts of students, teachers, and parents to achieve the most from the ability grouping of the students.

The problem was that of determining the practices used in ability grouping of students in large Kansas high schools, and the role of the counselor in these programs of ability grouping. This study was made to answer some of the questions about the extent of ability grouping and the uses large Kansas high schools were making of the sectioning process. The information collected might be useful to counselors in improving education in their schools through the use of ability grouping.

The procedure used was a combination of library research and a survey of large Kansas high schools by means of a questionnaire. Literature on ability grouping published since 1959 was examined for the views expressed by educators about the proper functions of ability grouping and the place for it in the total program. Questionnaires were sent to all Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more students to determine what was being done in ability grouping. Since it was the role of the counselor and the practices in ability grouping which were being studied, the information was divided into three major sections, (1) current practices in ability grouping in Kansas high schools with enrollments of 400 or more students, (2) the role of the administrator and his relation to the counselor in the ability grouping of students, (3) the role of the counselor in ability grouping of students in large Kansas high schools.

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